

Compassion Crumbs

By Lyn Hershey

I believe the church acted in sincerity when it established the Compassion Fund.

Minority persons who helped set up the fund did not ask for what was needed, nor what they felt the church could afford, but a realistic figure they felt the church had compassion to produce.

The total amount that was pledged, if given, would be \$1,000,000 by August 1971. The total amount received as of June 8, is \$138,091. The total amount requested by minority churches is over \$500,000.

Hope was given when the commitment was made. This is reflected in the amount of request for compassion fund money. This hope is fading and the question is being asked by minority people, "How dwelleth the love of God in them" (1 John 3:17)?

I can only say thanks to the minority brothers for having hope in the white established church. You are to be commended for your faith. Can we really ask for forgiveness again or should we simply admit that we are not capable of being God's compassionate people today? Can we even hope you will give us more time to prove our compassion? Or shall we simply go on our selfish way, knowing that God is our final Judge?

Did we really mean to be compassionate or were we simply following the white established practice of saying one thing and doing another? The Compassion Fund is described in the 1971 *Mennonite Yearbook* as, "A special above-budget asking to make possible additional ministries to people in poverty in our impoverished areas, city and rural. The Fund is to be administered by the MBMC through their Urban Racial Council." (Now the Minority Ministries Council.) How many churches are meeting their budget, that they will have "above budget to give"? Could the Compassion Fund be considered only the leftovers? No, we don't even have leftovers. Would not the Compassion Fund be more appropriately described as the crumbs that fall from the table that we can spare without hurting ourselves? This is reflected in the amount received compared to the amount pledged.

Why is there a problem in meeting the Compassion Fund? Was it not committed by the delegates in the 1970 General

Conference meeting at Turner, Oregon? I would like to look at a few points to consider why we are not meeting our goal.

We must realize that this was a delegation and not the entire constituency that voted for the Compassion Fund. This point raises some very serious questions. Can't we rely on the delegates to speak for us? Cannot the delegates, that we elect, expect us to trust their judgment and back up their decisions? Do delegates not, or are they not expected to report on the decisions they made at conference? We will need to study these questions in each separate location. But must we allow these questions to be a deterrent to being compassionate?

We need to understand at the time the need was presented to our church the black manifesto had just been presented to the world. Many people actually fear the Compassion Fund is a part of the black manifesto.

In this area, I feel we as whites desperately fail our responsibility. We put the minority person in the awkward position of begging for financial assistance. Whites must be concerned and take the responsibility of speaking to the white church in the area of sharing. It is more than a person can bear to be destitute of funds and then to have to beg. This is putting a person in a position that he can only speak out in anger or completely turn his back on the source of help.

A hindrance to being compassionate is that we are still victims of white racism. We still tend to believe the myth that if the minority person would simply work hard and obey God, everything would be OK. This is based on white racism. The facts are, even the most advanced blacks spiritually, economically, and academically can still be humiliated by being refused housing in certain areas, service in restaurants, motel accommodations in many areas, and even acceptance in many churches today. Many of us as whites still have trouble admitting that it is extremely difficult for persons of dark skin to enjoy the privileges whites do. We need to respond as Peter, in Acts 10:34, following a vision from God; Peter declared, "I perceive that God is no respecter of persons."

We must exercise trust in the minority person. We still seem to feel it is more commendable to use our money soundly (in line with middle-class thinking) than it is to

Lyn Hershey, Elkhart, Indiana, is Director of Cross-Cultural Relations under the Mennonite Mission Board.

exercise faith and trust in giving to minority administration. We need to realize that because we do something in a proper middle-class business way it is not necessarily Christian.

What Is the Answer?


[Many religions today are attempting to do their part in bringing racial harmony. Educational institutions are providing special courses, seminars, exchange programs, and all types of experiences and exposures. The Mennonite Church, through the encouragement of the Minority Ministries Council, has formed a race education program to attempt to bring understanding to the racial conflicts.

I would encourage taking part in the many good programs being administered to help in the area of racial understanding. There is no one way to work with the problem. Many ways must be used but we must become involved. As Christians we are to be peacemakers. We must be concerned about reconciliation.

I believe there is one qualification that we must meet before we will be capable of doing anything. Much of the problem today in racial misunderstanding is based on fear. Until 1 John 4:18 becomes a reality in our lives we are not capable of being what God would have us to be. "There is no fear in love."

If the Compassion Fund is to really be what we set out for it to be, instead of a few crumbs, we must love as Christ loved. We must hear God instead of the white society around us that would squeeze us into its mold.

In order to right the wrongs of the past we will need to become radical like Zacchaeus as recorded in Luke 19. No, this may not follow the "sound business practices of white America," but this is what we are called to do when we stop giving crumbs and truly demonstrate our compassion the world will conclude that we are His disciples by the love we have one to another.

In order to meet the \$500,000 per year pledge we may need to give up that new church building, give up that new classroom space, stick with black and white TV instead of color, allow our own church budget to go unmet, eat hamburger instead of steak, eat out at MacDonaldis instead of the Holiday Inn, go another year without painting the church facilities, maybe we as whites will need to suffer a little to allow the minority people to enjoy a little of the abundant life. Our commitment of six dollars (\$6.00) per member will not be met unless we take seriously our integrity as Christians. 

Prayer ... On the Loss of a Friend

By Rachel Schmucker

O Holy Spirit:
 Forgive those things in me which do not speak of Christ;
 Those selfish thoughts and actions,
 Those critical words,
 The self-pity.
 Fill me with Thy love,
 Thy understanding,
 Thy concern.
 Comfort me with Thy wisdom.
 And as I miss Thee in today's circumstances,
 Give me patience to wait
 And courage to go on.
 For the friend I have lost
 May he not be lost to Thee.
 Pursue him with Thy love,
 Thy wisdom,
 Thy compassion.
 Never forsake him.
 Make him alert to Thy call
 And obedient to Thy voice.
 Deliver him from doubts,
 Temptations,
 Self-sufficiencies,
 And show him
 Christ.
 Draw near to him.
 Grant him sonship in Thy kingdom.
 Where I have failed him,
 O Holy Spirit,
 Do Thou not fail him.
 Give wings to my prayer, O Spirit,
 Thine is the glory.
 Amen.

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Our Lord's first public act was prayer. "As he prayed the heavens were opened." The last act of the Crucified before giving up His life in atonement for the world's sin was prayer. — Oswald C. J. Hoffmann, *Life Crucified*, 1959.